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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

Letter dated 2 December 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you attached the Malta Statement of the World NGO Forum Launching the International Year of the Family, adopted by the World NGO Forum on Launching the Year, which my Government had the honour to host in Malta from 28 November to 2 December 1993 (see annex).

I shall be grateful to you if you would have the Statement circulated as an official document of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 109, particularly in the context of the launching of the International Year of the Family in the General Assembly, on 7 December 1993, pursuant to resolution 47/237 of 20 September 1993.

(Signed) Joseph CASSAR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Malta Statement of the World NGO Forum Launching the International Year of the Family

The World NGO Forum Launching the International Year of the Family, held at Valletta from 28 November to 2 December 1993 and attended by over 1,000 participants from nearly 100 countries,

Taking note of the overwhelming support for the Statement of the International Non-Governmental Organizations on the International Year of the Family (IYF) 1994, presented to the World NGO Forum and signed by 58 international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, 25 other international non-governmental organizations, 13 regional non-governmental networks and 105 national and local organizations from 40 countries,

In the spirit of solidarity and consensus,

Endorses the Statement, as attached, and

Designates it as the Malta Statement of the World NGO Forum Launching the International Year of the Family.

APPENDIX

Statement of International Non-Governmental Organizations on the International Year of the Family 1994

We, the undersigned international non-governmental organizations,

1. Welcome the launching of the International Year of the Family and the related event, the World NGO Forum in Malta, and are confident that the deliberations at the Forum will assist in creating a world-wide International Year of the Family movement. Recalling the active contributions of the non-governmental organization sector in the preparations for the International Year of the Family, the global meeting in Malta is a further expression of the efforts and potential of the non-governmental community at all levels in working for and with families;

2. Recognize families as intrinsically self-reliant units in society, which can, even in adverse external circumstances, regulate their own internal affairs and maintain successful and harmonious relationships;

3. Advocate policies seeking to empower families as basic social groups, in order to provide continuity, security and dignity to families and their individual members in the light of widespread, constant and rapid changes resulting from the interactions between peoples and their environment;

4. Affirm that families as the fundamental group units of society are entitled to a maximum of protection and assistance to fulfil their roles for the well-being of the individual members and society, in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the relevant declarations, principles and resolutions;

5. Reiterate and commit ourselves to the principles and objectives of the International Year of the Family, underlining that stable families are main agents of sustainable development. Such a development depends largely on the social, emotional, spiritual, cultural and political maturity of all family members. In this context, recognition of families demands a comprehensive approach to issues such as redistribution of global resources, eradication of poverty and assuring education and health for all;

6. Recognize the diverse forms and functions of families around the world, on condition that they are fully consistent with the fundamental human rights. The International Year of the Family is of special relevance in promoting concepts of families and intra-familial relationships that will allow the actual enjoyment of these rights, with special emphasis on gender equality and the rights of minor children;

We, the undersigned international non-governmental organizations,

7. Urge Governments to support the establishment and/or extension of national coordinating bodies for the International Year of the Family in order to develop concrete action plans at the national, local and community levels, taking into consideration the capacities and self-help potential of families themselves and of the non-governmental organizations working at the grass-roots level;

8. Request Governments to formulate family-sensitive policies, promoting self-reliance and participation of families, taking into consideration the aspirations and expectations of families themselves. In this regard, a family-friendly society, specific economic and ecological measures and recognition of the contributions of families in the social, cultural and economic fields are indispensable;

9. Appeal to Governments to consider special joint action with non-governmental organizations in such fields as: evaluation of social programmes and their impact on the family; practical research to identify data, articulate family issues and suggest solutions; study of gender issues and identification of measures to ensure equality between males and females of all ages; enhancement of a positive and objective image of family life in the media; reconciliation of professional life and employment with family obligations; education for family life; family health issues; assistance to families living in extreme poverty; help to refugee and displaced families, including their relationships with their host country and country of origin; development of support and counselling services to families and family members in difficulty or at risk;

10. Invite Governments to support and join non-governmental initiatives and plans of family movements to celebrate 15 May of each year as the International Day of the Family;

11. Request that "family" should be a specific topic in relevant national and international reports on social issues;

12. Urge Governments to consider the role and function of families and their capacities and needs in the forthcoming meetings of the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development. To ensure implementation of the International Year of the Family plans and activities, family should also be considered in the context of programmes developed for the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995);

13. Appeal to Governments and the United Nations to undertake adequate follow-up measures to the International Year of the Family and to enter into an ongoing process of building a family-friendly society;

14. Request that a declaration on the rights and responsibilities of families be identified as a specific goal in the follow-up to the International Year of the Family;

In turn and in conformity with our own respective aims, experiences and competences we, the undersigned international non-governmental organizations,

15. Plan to explore areas where new and creative actions can be developed to support family resilience and to emphasize the significance of family life for the benefit of its members, thereby empowering them to master their everyday situations and to make decisions on their future;

16. Intend to continue assuming the responsibility for individualized and flexible services for families, reviewing and revising such assistance programmes regularly by involving families in order to respond most effectively to their needs and expectations;

17. Continue to review our role as advocates and mediators in representing family strengths and family concerns to politicians, media, educational authorities, employers, employees, specialized organizations and institutions concerned with children, youth, women, men, elderly, disabled, dispossessed and so on;

18. Hope to develop a new culture of partnership and new patterns of negotiation and cooperation at the national and international levels, promoting formal and informal networks and coalitions to fulfil our vital functions in the interest of families. In doing so, a major emphasis will be placed on effectiveness, transparency and accountability of family-oriented non-governmental organization operations.

In conclusion, we, the undersigned international non-governmental organizations, look with confidence upon the dawn of the International Year of the Family. We subscribe to its ultimate objective, emphasizing the recognition of values such as caring, sharing, solidarity and responsibility, mutual respect and tolerance, in order to promote the "smallest democracy at the heart of society" in its unique contribution to the achievement of durable peace in the world.